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ABSTRACT

A survey was conducted among community college and university faculty to obtain information on writing task assignments and evaluation in classes (excluding English classes) taught during the first two years of postsecondary education. It was found that faculty in two- and four-year colleges commonly require only essay responses in tests and assignments. The cognitive demands of the tasks are generally advanced, and include evaluation and synthesis, although there is some variation between the two- and four-year institutions. Faculty state that they weigh discourse-level features such as content and organization more heavily than sentence-level features such as spelling, grammar, and mechanics; the groups are shown to differ significantly on reaction to wordiness and poor handwriting. Faculty report that they are pleased by students' progress, creativity, and humor; they are most annoyed by sentence-level features, an observation that seems to contradict their statements on criteria for evaluation. (Author/MSE)

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Writing Tasks and Evaluation in Lower Division Classes: A Comparison of Two- and Four-Year Post-Secondary Institutions

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Abstract

This paper describes a survey of faculty writing task assignments and evaluation in classes taught during the first two years of post-secondary education. It was found that faculty on two- and four-year campuses commonly require only essay responses. Cognitive demands of the tasks are generally quite advanced and include evaluation and synthesis, though there is some variation between the two groups. Faculty state that they weigh discourse-level features, such as content and organization, more heavily than sentence-level ones, such as spelling, grammar and mechanics, though wordiness and poor handwriting categories show significant differences between the two groups. Faculty state that they are pleased by students' progress, creativity and humor, but are most annoyed by sentence-level features, a possible contradiction with their evaluation techniques.

Writing Tasks and Evaluation in Lower Division Classes: A Comparison of Two- and Four-Year Post-Secondary Institutions

Since the onset of the international English for Specific Purposes movement about fifteen years ago (see Robinson, 1980) and the Writing Across the Curriculum and Sheltered Classroom Movements which have sprung up recently in Great Britain and the United States (see, e.g., Fulwiler, 1984), instructors of English, especially of ESL students, have become increasingly aware of the necessity for preparing students for the tasks which they must perform after they leave the English classroom (Chambers, 1980) and the transferability of activities and assignments from this classroom to the world (see, e.g., Johns, 1984).

Literature Review

To determine what tasks the students must perform and the manner in which they will be evaluated for performing these tasks, needs assessments have become commonplace, especially for adult students, where immediate needs are more evident and more pressing (see, e.g., Drobnic, 1978; Munby, 1978; Richterich & Chancerel, 1978). These needs assessments vary in breadth and focus, depending upon the aims of the

researcher and the student group involved (see, e.g., Johns, 1981; Thomas, 1984).

One important concern for high school, college and university English language teachers is for the types of writing tasks required of students in the academic classroom. In an extensive study of secondary-level writing assignments in six subject areas in 200 American schools, Applebee (1981) found that most writing in academic classes at that level is mechanical: students are asked to use writing to record information, to fill in blanks, and to make short answers. Applebee notes with disappointment the problems that this limited use of writing presents for students:

> Because the emphasis is on specific items of information, rather than on the way those items are integrated and presented in coherent prose, such writing situations provide little opportunity for instruction that might help students develop specific writing skills. (1981, p. 101)

A number of studies have focused upon the writing tasks required in colleges and universities as well. Some of these studies, such as Swales' research on essay examination types (1982), concentrate upon the

requirements of one task category. Others (e.g., Johns, 1980; West, 1982; West & Byrd, 1982) examine the discourse elements or tasks common to specific disciplines such as engineering and business.

Kroll (1979) looked at task requirements from the college students' point of view, concentrating upon their perceptions of writing types required in past, present and future circumstances. She found that the traditional English class assignment, the personal essay, is not considered important to students, but business letters and reports, both survey and technical, are. Kroll concluded:

> I do not think it is difficult to motivate students to perform writing tasks which they feel have some practical applications to their lives. What has always been difficult has been motivating them to perform writing tasks they consider far removed from the reality of their other courses, to say nothing of their outside lives. (1979, p. 227)

Lee (1977) was also interested in student perceptions, as well as those of faculty in disciplines most heavily enrolled by ESL students (e.g., business, mathematics, and engineering) at the University of

Tennessee. Like Ostler (1980), who conducted a similar study at USC, she found that there were differences between disciplines in the number and variety of writing tasks required. When considering evaluation, Lee noted that spelling and grammar were rated lowest by both students and faculty and content and organization were rated as most important.

Jacobs (1982) was most concerned with task demands and performance. In a revealing longitudinal study of the writing complexity of tasks required in college biology classes, Jacobs found that though students at advanced levels can produce narratives fairly effectively, they have difficulty responding to essay questions requiring integration and restructuring of previously learned material. When writing more complex assignments, students are often less coherent and grammatical than when writing narratives. Like Tarone, Frauenfelder, and Selinker (1976), Jacobs found that these ESL students, supposedly at a stable proficiency level, vary in their abilities to perform tasks depending upon task complexity. No doubt these same conclusions could be drawn about native-English speakers.

In an attempt to validate the multiple choice measure for writing on the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language), Bridgeman and Carlson (1984) conducted interviews and distributed a questionnaire to thirty-six public and private four-year colleges in the United States and Canada. They found that faculty of all disciplines required writing during the students' first years, but that the type and length of assignment varied considerably, from lab reports and brief article summaries in engineering to longer research papers for business students. They found that students in the sciences and engineering were most often asked to describe, but that graduate business students and psychology majors were most often asked to argue a point. Bridgeman and Carlson concluded that:

> Although some important common elements among the different departments were reported, the survey does indicate that different disciplines do not uniformly agree on the writing task demands or on a single preferred mode of discourse for evaluating entering undergraduate and graduate students. (1984, p. 279)

This difference in writing task type also exists on the high school level, according to Applebee, and presented

problems for those writers who can produce writing for only one subject. Applebee quotes a science teacher as saying:

> I had a student who went to the state competition and won outstanding in science . . . he could use subordinate clauses . . . I thought there was nothing wrong with the way he was writing, his grammar and everything else was good as far as English was concerned. Yet he was failing his English class in ninth grade because he was not creative. The young man did not want to be creative, he wanted to be scientific and to write well with it. And we could never convince this young man to be creative, and I believe he ended up failing freshman English. (1981, p. 69)

Another important study was by Dietrich, who was concerned with the evaluation of college student writing. He stated that "teachers who have never graded a set of papers that have been previously graded by another teacher seldom realize how commonly and seriously teachers disagree on their judgments of writing ability" (1974, p. 5). To conduct his study, he asked 10 college teachers, 10 social scientists, 10 natural scientists, 20 writers and editors, 10 lawyers

and 10 businesspeople to divide the papers of 300 college students into nine piles according to proficiency. Of the 300 essays, 101 received every grade (i.e., appeared on every pile) from 1-9; 270 received 7-9 different grades. Using factor analysis, Dietrich established five clusters of readers who judged papers on different bases. The largest cluster judged readers on ideas, the second largest on mechanics and the third, on organization.

Rose (1979) also studied evaluation of student writing, by both English and academic faculty. He found that at UCLA, faculty of both types said that they valued organization more than factual accuracy; however, the TA's who actually grade the papers had been told by faculty outside of the English department to sift through poorly organized prose to find facts. "If the facts were accurate, the students did well" (1979, p. 273). Halpern, Spreitzer, and Givens, in their study of academic faculty evaluation came to the same conclusion: "general faculty tend to give students higher scores for information than for language skill" (1978, p. 397).

However, Rose concluded that despite the emphasis upon information in other disciplines, general faculty

and English faculty were in basic disagreement about what is important in writing:

> Our disagreements come over form and style and felicities. But our true befuddlements arise from the vague thesis, the sloppy argument, the missing evidence--and most of us can agree on these. (1979, p. 274)

Several conclusions can be drawn from the studies cited here:

1. That the writing tasks in secondary schools, at least in the United States, are less demanding and less varied than those in universities. Generally, they involve "writing without composing" (Britton et al., 1975). Therefore students who attend American high schools may have difficulty adjusting to university writing assignments.

2. That in the studies reviewed, university academic faculty generally report that they evaluate global characteristics in writing (e.g., organization and content) as more important than local ones (e.g., grammar and spelling). High school faculty, on the other hand, tend to concentrate on sentence-level syntax, mechanics and usage.

3. Task demands or genre in university classes (e.g., short summaries and long research papers) vary in frequency and type from discipline to discipline, as do discourse types (e.g., describing and arguing). These demands may result in writing products, produced by a single student, which vary in grammaticality and coherence (Applebee, 1981; Jacobs, 1983). However, as Rose (1979) points out, there are some basic characteristics of academic prose upon which faculty from all disciplines can agree.

This Study

This study builds upon some of the research cited here, yet its emphases are quite different. First, rather than being an examination of classes in a student's major or all classes in an institution, it is restricted to classes in the first two years of post-secondary education, often not in the student's major, but among those required of students for educational breadth. The first two years have been chosen because we found that it is often the first post-secondary classes, not the classes in students' academic major, that give students most trouble and tend to lower their grade point averages.[1] English classes were excluded from the study, since the writing and evaluation in

these classes is often different from that of other university classes (see Kroll, 1979, above). This study is also different from those cited because it surveys faculty from two- and four-year institutions, since a large number of students are attending community or junior colleges for their first two years of education.

The cognitive demand categories for this study have been based upon a cognitive hierarchy, first suggested by Bloom (1956) and widely accepted in educational circles. Evaluation criteria were determined by the clusters of factors influencing the readers in the Dietrich research cited above (1974).

Questions

The purpose of this study, then, is to determine the writing tasks and evaluation criteria for post-secondary classes, generally completed in the first two years of enrollment in a community college or four-year university. For each question posed, the faculty responses of the two- and four-year institutions were compared. The questions were the following:

1. What types of writing are most frequently assigned in these classes?

2. What is the nature of the cognitive demands upon students as they complete their written work? Are they, for example, required only to list items, or must they complete cognitively demanding tasks, such as synthesis and evaluation?

3. Which factors are considered most important in student writing and given most credit in evaluation? Are they more global factors, such as ideas and organization, or are they more local factors, such as spelling and legible handwriting?

4. What pleases faculty most about student writing in these classes?

5. What pleases them least about student writing?

Method

A questionnaire requiring ranking (see Appendix) was distributed to 200 randomly-selected faculty (10% of the total faculty population) teaching lower division classes at the largest state university in California, San Diego State (SDSU). The same questionnaire, with a few necessary modifications, was distributed to all of the contract faculty (N=150) at San Diego City College (City), a metropolitan two-year institution. In addition to completing the questionnaire, faculty were asked to provide some

demographic information and include a list of writing assignments or criteria for evaluation.

The first distribution of the questionnaire, made late in the fall semester, yielded an unsatisfactory response, since an average of 20% of those contacted responded. However, a second distribution, at the beginning of the following semester, provided a more satisfactory response. There were no duplications, since the second distribution was accompanied by a memo asking only those who had not completed the questionnaire to respond.

At the four-year institution, 116 responses (58%) were returned, including those received in both semesters. Faculty responding were spread fairly evenly over 59 departments, with the largest group from biology (9) and the second largest (7) from health sciences. There were 70 responses (46%) from the two-year institution. Again, the spread among departments was fairly even.

It may be that one reason for the good responses to the questionnaire is that the two institutions surveyed, SDSU and City, are involved in a cooperative writing program, in which City College instructors and SDSU instructors jointly develop, teach and grade the

remedial writing courses which prepare students for the SDSU lower-division writing proficiency examination. Faculty at both campuses are interested in the progress of this program.

Results

A number of comments about the reporting of the results should be made. First, it should be pointed out that to answer the research questions 1-3, below, faculty were asked to respond to each item by circling a number from 1 (seldom) to 5 (frequently) (see questions 4, 6 and 7 on the questionnaire). Because many of the faculty did not circle numbers for all items, it was assumed that these faculty did not require that item or believe that it was important for their classes. Therefore, the absence of response was assumed to indicate a "never" response.

In order to make the tables more readable, the five categories in the first three tables have been collapsed to three. The reduction was carried out in the following manner:

Under the new "1" ranking were grouped "never" and a response of 1 or 2 ("seldom").

Under the "2" ranking were included original responses of 3.

Under the "3" ranking were clustered responses of 4 and 5 ("frequently").

"Dual distribution" indicates that responses were fairly evenly balanced among the categories.

It should also be noted that the questions below have been numbered to correspond to the research questions listed above, not to the numbers found in the questionnaire.

Question 1: What types of writing (or writing genre) are required in classes taken during the first two years at the two institutions?

Insert Table 1 about here

Table 1 compares the two- and four-year institution faculty responses. It shows, first of all, that many faculty made "seldom" or "never" responses, indicating that there is not much writing or writing variety in these classes. It also indicates that for both institutions, only essay responses are frequently required. In the case of the community colleges, observation reports and term papers are also mentioned as frequent requirements.

TABLE 1

WRITING GENRE REQUIRED

CATEGORY	TWO-YEAR INSTITUTION		FOUR-YEAR INSTITUTION	
	MAJORITY OF RESPONSES	MEAN	MAJORITY OF RESPONSES	MEAN
**Essay	Frequently (39%)	1.9	Frequently (58%)	2.2
**Summary	Seldom (50%)	1.7	Seldom (73.9)	1.4
Term Paper	Frequently (39%)	1.9	Seldom (54%)	1.8
**Lab Report	Seldom (60%)	1.6	Seldom (80%)	1.3
Case Study	Seldom (68%)	1.5	Seldom (84%)	1.2
**Group Writing	Seldom (64%)	1.5	Seldom (81%)	1.3
Letters	Seldom (81%)	1.3	Seldom (91%)	1.1
**Instructions	Seldom (69%)	1.4	Seldom (94%)	1.0
**Observation Reports	Frequently (40%)	1.9	Seldom (75%)	1.4

** significant at .05 level

Table 1 also indicates the differences between the groups in genre type assigned. The assignment of essays, summaries, lab reports, group writing, instructions, and observation reports differed significantly, at the .05 level.

Question 2: What is the nature of the cognitive demands upon students as they complete their written work?

As was mentioned earlier, these items were arranged hierarchically, according to what is traditionally called Bloom's Taxonomy (1956), with the least demanding first (i.e., listing concepts, ideas and events) and the most demanding last (i.e., evaluating). Table 2 shows a comparison of the faculty responses from the two institutions. Though the means

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Insert Table 2 about here

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differ in several categories, the "listing of concepts," "summarizing" and "arguing" items, none of these items differ significantly between the two groups, i.e., the .05 level. It should be pointed out that with the exception of "arguing" and "synthesizing," the City College faculty responses were

TABLE 2

COGNITIVE DEMANDS

CATEGORY	TWO-YEAR INSTITUTION		FOUR-YEAR INSTITUTION	
	MAJORITY OF RESPONSES	MEAN	MAJORITY OF RESPONSES	MEAN
Listing Concepts	Dual distribution	2.0	Seldom	1.7
Summarizing	Frequently (49%)	2.1	Dual distribution	1.9
Comparing	Frequently (50%)	2.2	Frequently (58%)	2.2
Applying Models	Frequently (59%)	2.2	Frequently (55%)	2.2
Arguing	Dual distribution	1.9	Frequently (49%)	2.1
Analyzing	Frequently (53%)	2.3	not enough responses	
Synthesizing	Frequently (53%)	2.2	Frequently (55%)	2.2
Evaluating	Frequently (67%)	2.4	Frequently (62%)	2.4

arranged hierarchically, i.e., "listing of concepts" was required least often, followed by "summarizing," and so on. The same is true of the SDSU faculty, with the exception of "arguing," which is given less value.

Question 3: What factors are considered most important in evaluating student writing?

Table 3 shows a comparison of the responses of faculty from the two institutions to this question. As

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Insert Table 3 about here

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can be seen from the means, "ideas" and "organization," both global features, were considered the most important criteria. "Wording," "uniqueness of viewpoint" and "legibility of handwriting" were the three criteria which differed significantly between faculty groups, at a .05 level. It appears from this table that the faculty from the two-year institution, City College, place more emphasis on sentence-level features, such as wording and legibility.

Question 4: What pleases faculty most about the written work of their students?

Since this was an open-ended question, a large number of different responses were made and then

TABLE 3

FACTORS IMPORTANT IN EVALUATING STUDENT WRITING

CATEGORY	TWO-YEAR INSTITUTION		FOUR-YEAR INSTITUTION	
	MAJORITY OF RESPONSES	MEAN	MAJORITY OF RESPONSES	MEAN
Ideas	Frequently (86%)	2.8	Frequently (92%)	2.8
Organization	Frequently (81%)	2.7	Frequently (81%)	2.7
**Wording	Frequently (74%)	2.6	Frequently (52%)	2.3
**Unique Usage	Frequently (51%)	2.2	Dual Distribution	1.9
Punctuation	Frequently (58%)	2.3	Frequently (58%)	2.4
Spelling	Frequently (55%)	2.2	Frequently (47%)	2.1
**Legibility	Frequently (55%)	2.3	Frequently (51%)	2.2
	Frequently (52%)	2.2	Dual Distribution	1.9

**significant at the .05 level

clustered under appropriate categories. This was the opportunity for faculty to praise students' work or to mention the particular elements of students' writing that they find most satisfactory. A number of faculty did not comment; others commented at some length. Therefore, the following decisions were made about the response count:

1. Each faculty response was allotted a maximum of two items. Therefore, if a faculty member wrote, "Students follow the assignment, organize well and have good ideas," only the first two items would be recorded, under "Writing According to Instructions" and "Good Organization and Development" (see Table 4).

2. If a faculty member responded to the question "What annoys or bothers you most about the written word of your students?" (below) but left the question about "what pleases you," the response was included in the "Very little/not pleased" category. If, however, a faculty member answered neither of these questions, no response was recorded in the response count. None of those faculty who responded to "What pleases you most . . . " left "What annoys or bothers you most . . ." blank; therefore there is no category in Table 5 which indicates an opposite response.

Insert Table 4 about here

As can be seen in Table 4, the items which include more than 40% of the responses relate to affective and motivational factors more than the quality of the final product. "Originality" is the superordinate for the first cluster of factors most pleasing to the faculty of both the two- year (28%) and the four-year institutions (35%). Included in this category were phrases such as "self-expression," "unique viewpoint," "apply writing to personal examples or everyday life," "youthful enthusiasm and originality" and "sometimes they say funny things."

Comments about student progress and effort were next in order of importance (14% and 11% of the totals). Under this category came items such as "they try," "they improve over the semester," "they are learning to revise."

The third most chosen factor (8% of each faculty group), "Organization and Development," deals with writing quality, involving both unity and coherence. Comments under this category included "tells the reader

TABLE 4

FEATURES IN STUDENT WRITING WHICH PLEASE FACULTY

CLUSTER CATEGORIES	TWO-YEAR INSTITUTION		FOUR-YEAR INSTITUTION	
	NUMBER OF RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL	NUMBER OF RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL
Originality	29	28%	51	35%
Progress/effort	15	14%	17	11%
Following directions	9	8%	12	8%
Use of correct terms	8	7%	4	3%
Clarity/conciseness	7	6%	9	6%
Handwriting/spelling	6	5%	7	5%
Organization	2	1%	4	3%
Other	7	6%	7	5%
Not pleased	18	17%	23	15%
No response to either question	6	5%	12	8%
	106		146	

what the essay is going to be about," "realization of the interrelatedness of things."

Percentages in other categories are quite small, except for the features clustered under "Very little/not pleased." Eighteen percent of the City College faculty and 15% of the San Diego State faculty had nothing good to say about student writing in lower-division classes. They made comments such as "damned little pleases me."

Question 5: What annoys or bothers faculty most about student writing in general education classes?

This provided faculty at both campuses an opportunity to vent their spleen--and they did, responding more frequently and more vehemently to the question than to the question about pleasing qualities of student writing. No faculty who responded to the "What pleases you . . ." question failed to respond to this one; a number who had said little pleases them or left the previous question blank responded to this question. As in the response count above, no faculty member was given more than two response counts, no matter how much was written.

TABLE 5

FEATURES IN STUDENT WRITING WHICH ANNOY FACULTY

	TWO-YEAR INSTITUTION		FOUR-YEAR INSTITUTION	
CLUSTER CATEGORIES	NUMBER OF RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL	NUMBER OF RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL
Sentence level errors, editing/proofreading	33	30%	97	55%
Lack of originality, plagiarism	27	25%	27	15%
Failure to follow directions or the prompt	21	19%	11	6%
Lack of clarity	6	5%	15	9%
Lack of organization	9	8%	14	8%
Other	6	5%	0	0
No response	6	5%	12	7%
	108		176	

Insert Table 5 about here

Interestingly enough, though sentence-level items accounted for only 5% of the responses for both groups for the "What pleases you . . ." question, they were mentioned as the chief items of annoyance by the faculty on both campuses (30% and 55%, respectively). Under this category come a variety of comments including "grammar," "spelling atrocities," "poor editing," and "illegible." One SDSU faculty member sent a separate note, indicating his discouragement:

> In the past, I have always required a term paper, even in my 100-level classes, on the theory that the only way to learn to write is to write and have the work carefully evaluated. I actually read and commented on upwards of 100 four-page introductory papers this past fall. The dismal quality of the papers and the obviously miserable spelling and construction has led to a reluctant decision not to put myself through that again. This breaks a fifteen year pattern for me . . . .

The next most important writing problem (25% and 15%), according to faculty at both campuses, is that of

plagiarism or regurgitation of the material just as the students have learned it. This complaint focuses upon a prevalent and very serious problem for college students, who do not know how to manipulate information from other sources (e.g., a textbook, the lecture) to meet the purposes of the assignment (Jacobs, 1981; Johns, 1985). Comments under this category were "They just rephrase the question," "They just present the material, without organizing it," ". . . use of information in an unconnected manner." One City College faculty member summed up the response category in this manner:

> Some students appear to be "programmed" to regurgitate material as they memorized it. Whenever they are asked to examine and respond to new situations that require application of this memorized material, the students recognize key words which trigger "reflexivity," an outpouring of the studied material.

"Failure to follow directions and respond correctly to a question" was next in importance for the two-year college faculty (19%), though only 6% of the four-year institution faculty mentioned this problem. Other category clusters, e.g., "Lack of clarity" and

"Lack of organization" accumulated a small percentage of responses, compared with those in the first two categories.

Conclusions

A number of conclusions can be drawn from this study of writing task types and evaluation in lower division classes at two- and four-year institutions.

1. Though task types may vary considerably from discipline to discipline in students' majors (see Lee, 1977, above), essay responses seem to be the most common to the classes in the first two years of post-secondary education (excluding English). Essay responses require the appropriate use of external information (that is, not from the student's imagination or life experience) and integration of that information to respond to the prompt, something students have a great deal of trouble with.

It is also important to note that the prompts provided in faculty handouts were quite specific as to use of references, organization and length. For example, an SDSU Women's Studies class was given the following assignment:

> Write one paragraph stating the research question raised by Parsons or Myers and the social

scientific assumptions on which they base their answers. Remember the half-page limitation on doing this assignment.

A City College faculty member provided this question from a quiz:

> Recent research suggests that loss of memory with old age (senility) is related to the functional failure of cholinergic nerve fibers. It is believed that some aspect of synaptic transmission is inhibited or blocked. Injection of the drug scopolamine into young monkeys and humans causes an amnesia that resembles senility.
>
> a. Describe SEVERAL different possible ways a drug (such as scopolamine) may inhibit synaptic transmission.
>
> b. Imagine you can design a drug with any SPECIFIC action. Suggest one drug therapy that may effectivly treat this condition of senility.
>
> (One-half page was allotted to each question.)

2. Though it appears that the faculty from the four-year institution seems to rank the cognitive demands of their writing tasks hierarchically, the two-year college faculty have some variation, valuing

application of models and evaluation most highly. However, there are no significant differences, at the .05 level, between the two groups of responses.

3. Faculty at both campuses, like those in earlier studies (e.g., Lee, 1977; Rose, 1979) state that global features of discourse, e.g., organization and development of ideas, are evaluated most highly. However, it is interesting to note that some features, such as wordiness and legibility of handwriting, provide a significant difference between the two groups.

4. At both institutions, faculty were pleased with student progress, creativity and humor; yet it's important to note that about 1/5 of the responses to the "What pleases you . . ." question were negative. Nothing does. Little was said by the faculty about poor preparation of students; instead, blame was put on the students themselves, with comments such as "They don't try" or "They're sloppy." However, there could be another explanation of this poor writing phenomenon: there is such a difference between the cognitive demands and number of words required between high school writing assignments (see Applebee, 1981) and those in college, that students have very little idea

of how to respond to the essay and term paper prompts they are given. Because they don't know how to respond coherently (Jacobs, 1981), they tend to bunch information in their response exactly as it appears in the source or the lecture.

5. The responses to "What annoys or bothers you about student writing . . ." are interesting in that they seem to contradict the faculty statements on criteria for evaluation. Sentence-level factors, such as spelling and grammar, and general comments about sloppiness and editing were mentioned most frequently by faculty in response to this question. It is therefore difficult to believe that these factors do not influence grading, perhaps much more than the faculty themselves realize. It may be, as Zemelman (1978) points out, that faculty, even on an anonymous questionnaire, sometimes say "only what they think you think they ought to say" rather than what they actually do when they sit down to grade a stack of papers.

If one purpose of English classes at the post-secondary level is to prepare students for university writing assignments during their first two years of education, then this study can be useful in a number of ways. Though there are differences between the faculty

responses from the two institutions, there were also some likenesses which should be noted: faculty claim that they evaluate most heavily for global features of text, yet are most annoyed by poor editing and sentence-level skills; their writing prompts are specific and require the integration of one or more external sources into student discourse; and they require, for the most part, only one genre type, the essay response.

It is appropriate to conclude here with a comment by Bizzell, who reminds us of our task:

> We ought not to pretend to give people access to (the formalizing, abstracting power of academic work) by admitting them to college, then prevent them from really attaining it by not admitting them to the academic discourse community. (1982, p. 206)

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FACULTY EVALUATION

LOWER DIVISION STUDENT WRITING

In what department are you teaching?

_____

How long have you been teaching at San Diego State?

_____

PLEASE SELECT ONE LOWER-DIVISION CLASS WHICH YOU TEACH, PREFERABLY ONE WHICH HAS A NUMBER OF SECTIONS, AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS AS THEY APPLY TO THAT COURSE.

How many students usually enroll for all sections of this course each semester? (CIRCLE ONE)

UNDER 30	111 TO 150
30 TO 70	OVER 150
71 TO 110	

Which types of writing do you assign in this class? (CIRCLE ONE NUMBER FOR EACH ITEM THAT APPLIES)

	Seldom				Frequently
a. Essay test responses	1	2	3	4	5
b. Summaries of readings	1	2	3	4	5
c. Term or research papers	1	2	3	4	5
d. Laboratory reports	1	2	3	4	5
e. Case studies	1	2	3	4	5
f. Group writing assignments	1	2	3	4	5

	Seldom				Frequently
g. Letters or memos	1	2	3	4	5
h. Instructions	1	2	3	4	5
i. Observation reports	1	2	3	4	5
j. Other_____	1	2	3	4	5

5. How many writing assignments are students generally asked to complete each semester? (CIRCLE ONE)

1-3

4-6

7-9

10 or more

6. When completing their written work, which of the following are students most often asked to do?
(CIRCLE ONE NUMBER FOR EACH ITEM THAT APPLIES)

	Seldom				Frequently
a. Make a list of concepts, ideas or events	1	2	3	4	5
b. Summarize readings or lectures	1	2	3	4	5
c. Compare or contrast one concept, idea or theory with another	1	2	3	4	5
d. Apply models, principles or generalizations to a new situation	1	2	3	4	5
e. Argue a position	1	2	3	4	5

	Seldom				Frequently
f. Analyze (break down information into constituent parts)	1	2	3	4	5
g. Synthesize (produce something unique from what has been studied or observed)	1	2	3	4	5
h. Evaluate, using internal evidence or external criteria	1	2	3	4	5
i. Other_____	1	2	3	4	5

7. Which factors are most important in the evaluation of your students' writing? (Rank each factor by circling one number.)

	Not as important				Very important
a. Ideas: each point is discussed well. Clear development	1	2	3	4	5
b. Organization: writing is organized well or according to an assigned model	1	2	3	4	5
c. Wording: correct terms for the discipline or class are employed	1	2	3	4	5
d. Unique viewpoint: a creative approach to the assignment is evident	1	2	3	4	5
e. Usage: the sentence structure is correct	1	2	3	4	5
f. Correct punctuation	1	2	3	4	5
g. Correct or acceptable spelling	1	2	3	4	5
h. Legible handwriting	1	2	3	4	5
i. Other_____	1	2	3	4	5

8. Do ESL or foreign students have any special writing problems? If so, what are they?

_____

_____

9. What pleases you most about the writing of the students in your classes?

_____

_____

10. What annoys or bothers you most about the written work of your students?

_____

_____

Would you be willing to share a list of your writing assignments or criteria for grading them for you lower division class discussed above? If so, please enclose. This material will be kept separate from your questionnaire.

_____

Your responses are anonymous; however, if you would like to receive a report of the results, write your name and department in the section below. This section will be immediately detached when the questionnaire is received and stored until all of the data has been analyzed. Reports will be distributed in January.

THANK YOU. PLEASE RETURN THIS TO ANN JOHNS, ACADEMIC SKILLS, AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

****

To: Ann Johns, Academic Skills Center

From:_____

Department:_____

lease send me a copy of the questionnaire results.

Author Notes

The author would like to thank John Markley, of San Diego City College, and Leslie Johnson and Cathy Cisterninos of San Diego State, for their assistance in completing this research.

Footnote

[1]From a comment by Nancy Sprotte, Dean of Admissions, San Diego State University.